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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000240

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID AND OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (January 27-February 9, 2007)

¶1. Summary: Post presents the thirteenth edition of Northern Uganda Notes to provide information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda.

These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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¶2. The Juba negotiations have yet to resume because the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) refused to return to Juba. The LRA continues to insist on a venue change to Kenya or South Africa and the replacement of Sudanese mediator Riek Machar. In an effort to encourage the parties back to the negotiating table, the European diplomatic missions in Kampala called on the parties to resume the talks and find a long-term solution compatible with local community wishes, national laws, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Department's press statement released on February 1 raising concern that shifting the talks or replacing the mediator will prolong the suffering of the northern Uganda people, sparked an "emergency" meeting of the LRA delegates camped in Nairobi, according to spokesman Godfrey Ayoo. The Kenyan Government also subsequently issued a statement that it would not host the peace talks on February 4. The LRA is focusing its efforts on changing the venue to South Africa.

¶3. Vincent Otti stated that if the GOU does not want to move the peace talks, then "that is the end of the peace talks. We need somewhere else. If they reject, we can go back to war." The LRA leader may have been reacting to comments by President Museveni on local radio in Gulu that he was considering "Plan B", a military option.

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SECURITY UPDATE
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¶4. The numbers of night commuters have decreased to 2,700 in December 2006, according to UNICEF. These numbers are down from 23,885 in December 2005. UNICEF cites the improved security situation for the dramatic decrease. Surveys done by non-governmental organizations indicate children that continue to commute do so for reasons other than fear of abduction. Some face protection issues such as domestic violence. Other reasons are the desire to be with peers in a well-lit environment, and availability of services.

¶5. Reports of small groups of LRA in northern Uganda continue.

District officials reportedly made contact with a small group of 15 LRA near Atanga IDP camp in Pader District that never moved out of northern Uganda. Members of the group told the officials that they only wanted food and were not in the area to cause problems. Action Contre le Faim (ACF) said it made contact with a group near Koch Goma camp in Amuru District. Despite reports and sightings of LRA, UNHCR, and UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) report no discernible IDP movement from new sites back to established IDP camps.

¶6. Alice Lakwena, the founder of the Holy Spirit Movement and cousin to LRA leader Joseph Kony, who died on January 18 in a refugee camp in Kenya, was buried in her ancestral home in Gulu district on February 3. The Government of Uganda arranged the return of Lakwena's body from Kenya and paid for the burial costs.

¶7. Re-establishing rule of law and a functioning judicial system is moving slowly and illustrates other coordination and planning problems that are arising. Local district officials are concerned that newly arrived constables have no food and are dependent on either the military or WFP for rations. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that the paralegals with the Legal Aid Project assisting the courts in Gulu have stopped work because they have not been paid by the Uganda Law Society. The paralegals have been assisting judges recently deployed to Gulu to remove the backlog of court cases.

¶8. USG Activities: Embassy poloff attended a briefing by the UN Resident Coordinator on February 1. He said that the various sightings of small groups of LRA in northern Uganda caused the UN humanitarian organizations to rethink and prepare for the worst case scenario. This scenario would be precipitated by the failure of the peace talks and immediate resumption of hostilities in southern

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Sudan or a violent attack perpetrated by the LRA in northern Uganda. The UPDF might force IDPs back into camps and the humanitarian situation deteriorates. In the UN's most likely scenario, some form of the cessation of hostilities agreement is maintained. The security situation improves and the peace talks continue at a slow pace. Spontaneous population movements increase.

¶9. During the same briefing on security issues, Acting Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs James Mugume told poloffs that

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Congolese President Joseph Kabila promised that he would work with Uganda to resolve the LRA issue peacefully at The Great Lakes Summit in Nairobi.

¶10. On February 8, USAID's Peace Support Team met with five female parliamentarians from northern Uganda who recently traveled to the U.S. as part of the Initiative for Inclusive Security. Their recommendations include ensuring a minimum of one-third women's participation in the formal negotiating teams at Juba, inclusion of women on the confidence-building teams, and support for expanded local processes to prepare communities for peace, reconciliation, and reintegration of soldier, abductees, and IDPs. The group also called for increased representation of women on the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Peace, Recovery, and Development Program of the North.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶11. The Government continues to lack a clear, consistent message on returns. The Minister of Disaster Preparedness, Relief and Refugees traveled to northern Uganda on February 1 and said that he would like to see as many IDPs return as soon as possible to their land. At the same time, the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) in Kitgum has only approved 33 areas safe for return. Coordination problems among UN Agencies persist, often resulting in an incomplete understanding of the dynamics of population movements with the potential result of poorly conceived funding decisions leading to inappropriate interventions. Humanitarian organizations were

reporting that population movements in the Acholi sub-region continue unrestricted with the exception of Kitgum District.

¶12. USG Activities: Ambassador Browning launched USAID's Global Development Alliance with Coca-Cola on January 23. The \$500,000 private-public partnership, The Northern Uganda Watersprings Initiative, will improve access to potable water for returning communities.

¶13. USAID's Deputy Director launched the private-public GDA with Dunavant, the largest cotton purchaser in the world, on January 30. The \$1.9 million project, including USAID's \$550,000 contribution, is opening up 12,000 acres of land for 12,000 internally-displaced persons for cotton and food crops.

¶14. USAID/OFDA approved \$1.3 million for the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to purchase and distribute tools and seeds. The tools are needed to clear land that has remained fallow for many years prior to the March planting season.

¶15. Office of Food for Peace approved a contribution for World Food Program Uganda's protracted Relief and Recovery Operation of \$4.4 million for Fiscal Year 2007. To date, Food for Peace has contributed 22,850 metric tons of emergency food aid to WFP Uganda at a value of \$17 million.

¶16. An USAID/OFDA technical assistance team traveled to Kitgum, Pader, and Gulu to study water, sanitation, and food security issues to determine FY07 funding for these sectors. The team also met with the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa civil affairs teams, the Minister of State for Water Resources, and various non-government organizations and district officials. Some of the team's recommendations included: continued flexibility in OFDA's response to the northern Uganda situation; more emphasis on sustainable low-cost, hand-dug wells; protection of water sources; rehabilitation of hand-pumps; hygiene promotion; public-private partnerships to enhance sustainability of motorized pump systems; and the provision of tools and seeds to returnees.

¶17. The State Department's Office of Diplomatic Security formally approved the opening of a temporary office in Gulu by USAID. This office will be staffed by one expatriate and five local employees and will be housed in the Bank of Uganda building.

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FROM THE MEDIA AND WEB

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¶18. Several countries, including the U.S. and Canada issued press statements to encourage the parties to resume the peace talks.

¶19. The Department released the following statement on February 1. "The United States appreciates the Government of South Sudan's efforts to mediate a peaceful resolution of the 20-year old conflict with the LRA. We have followed closely the many rounds of the GOSS-mediated talks to date in Juba. We are concerned that demands to change the mediator and the venue of the talks will only delay peace in the region and further the suffering of displaced northern Ugandans. Our priority remains peace in northern Uganda. We continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons living in LRA-affected areas, promote reconciliation, and support the reintegration of former abductees and ex-combatants into their communities."

¶20. Also on February 1, Canada released this statement from Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter MacKay. "The current peace process represents the best opportunity in two decades to build a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict in northern Uganda. This opportunity must not be lost, since a return to hostilities would be tragic for the people of Uganda and other areas affected by the hostilities, including Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. Canada supports the continuation of the talks in Juba and calls upon all parties to make progress toward a final negotiated settlement."

¶21. The NGO Invisible Children launched a campaign to match 1,000 U.S. secondary schools with counterparts in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. For top fundraising schools, Invisible Children is offering an all expenses paid trip to northern Uganda during the summer of 2007 to rebuild schools for which they collected donations.

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